

ANTIQUITY

402 'machines' known in Hunza, and the mechanism of all three is so simple that parts can be replaced, repairs or adjustments effected, by any intelligent child—and we met no *unintelligent* Hunza child.

286 Anyone desirous of doing so can acquire a weaver's skill, and in our village of some 200 families there were seven or eight expert weavers. The loom-pit is a hole in the ground, 2 feet wide and deep and 2 feet 4 inches from back to front, with a stone bench at the back. Two horizontal poles balanced on stones a couple of feet above the ground at either side carry the heddles, etc. Here the weaver sets up his home-made loom of ingeniously simple construction worked by four treadles in the bottom of his pit. While he works, the owners of the wool sit by and wind his bobbins. A skilful weaver can make the nine yards of narrow homespun required for a man's cloak in a day and a half. The loom-pit occupies fully half the width of the 'street' and when being used forms the centre of a shifting group of cheerfully gossiping passers-by.

Goat's hair is woven on an even simpler upright frame, a forked piece of tree supplying the single shed required.

322 Turning is a rarer accomplishment than weaving, and our village boasted only one lathe-master. Like the loom the lathe is set up in a pit. The person desiring a bowl supplies the necessary rough-hewn block of wood (apricot or vine root preferred) and the motive power required to turn the horizontal bar, on to one end of which the wood is spiked. The turner crouches alongside with a selection of small curved chisels which he rests on an adjustable tripod to steady his hand (PLATE IV).

415 There is no room to tell of all the simple yet ingenious household utensils which the Hunzokuts conjure from the scanty resources at their disposal: the spliced wooden bow faced with plates of ibex horn and beautifully curved; the boys' catapult bow with double string of horse sinew, for scaring birds; the double-chambered wool-container made of rowan bark; the small vessel like an ash-tray which steadies the woman's rotating spindle and is moulded from the refuse of the apricot kernels left after the oil has been expressed. Not a shred of anything is wasted in Hunza. What cannot be eaten or turned to use—even the shell of the apricot kernel—is gratefully seized on as fuel for the pitifully small fire that cooks the bread and vegetables. Fires for mere heating are an undreamt of luxury. Hence the draught-proof house is essential, for at 7-8,000 feet, with snow mountains all round and a temperature of 19° Fahrenheit, the 'Great Cold' is

FIRST WALKS ABROAD

000 admire the view with a fine stretch of terraced fields below us, quaint little stone houses with groups of trees dotted here and there, and behind all, in every direction, the great mountains. On our way back there was a small boy, of perhaps thirteen, in the ex-lucerne field: "Who does this field belong to?" Just in the boastful way of small boys at home, he answered: "Oh, this is my field and that's my mulberry orchard you passed just now, and here's my house with the big mulberry tree over it, and this is my apricot tree and that is my father over there," pointing to our earlier friend who had moved some distance off. "I'm going home now," and he came along with us chattering away. "That's one of our lambs, and that's a kid." He passed his own door and walked all the way back with us. When we came to the bungalow David imitated his way of speaking: "And this is our house, and that's our chair in the verandah, and now we are going in to eat bread." The boy burst out laughing, evidently quite aware that we were chaffing him, waved his hand in farewell, and ran home at the double to tell his family all about it.

We had quite expected that the people would be friendly, but we had no idea they would be so spontaneously forthcoming and so quick to guess what we were driving at. Already by our second day we had made two sets of friends in the two nearest houses, and were sure of a welcome as we passed.

285 I asked Levy Kalbi next morning whether there was anyone who could make us a wastepaper basket. Within an hour or two he came along with an armful of willow twigs, squatted in the verandah: "If the Sahib will show what shape he would like, I'll make it now." So David made him a rough sketch, and in an hour or two he had finished a capacious basket that only needed to dry for a day or two in the sun. We asked what it should cost. He was almost hurt: "You shall not pay me for it. I am already eating your salt. And a basket is nothing, anyway." The day after he came along with a bunch of goat's hair under his arm which he was going to spin, and he thought we might like to watch. Oddly, the men spin the goat's hair and the women the wool. All these Hunza people are refresh-

Chapter 21

HUNZA CRAFTS

ONE of the most refreshing things about Hunza is the absence 402
of machinery. Every essential tool and utensil can be made and
mended at home, and every individual enjoys the self-respect 415
that comes from the exercise of necessary craftsmanship. The 412
picturesquely asymmetrical stone cooking-pots, oil-jars, and 463
crusie-lamps have each been fashioned by father or grand- 286 ●
father, or it may be great-grandfather. Each has its own indi- 283
viduality and its own history. The ladles and wooden spoons
of delightful and often fantastic shape have been cut out from
suitable branched bough or root—handle and bowl in one piece,
no two alike. Your own carefully planted and tended willows
supply the flexible withies for a dozen kinds of basket, and the
man or woman who could not construct the one required
would be hard to find. Reels and spindles for spinning, bobbins
and shuttles for weaving, wooden hoes and shovels, two-
prong forks cut in one piece from the tree or the graceful
five-pronged winnowing forks with neat and skilful lashings of
gut holding their curved teeth in place, the plough, the frame
and heddles of the loom, the treadles and framework of the
lathe that turns the wooden bowl, are all home-made. You [281]
cure the skins of your own beasts for sacks and bags and boots.
When the women want more wool for spinning, any man at
any moment will shear another sheep while the women and
children hold its legs.

The only work that the home cannot itself tackle is the 326
ironwork—a very recent substitute for stone and bone and 177
horn. An occasional iron pick or shovel, fork or crowbar is 412
brought up “from below” (India or Kashmir) by a returning 563

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homes, and the women know no other. The existence of this interesting language-island, within the language-island of Burushaski, had been unsuspected by European scholars till DL set about investigating it. He could not devote much time to it, but gleaned enough to establish the fact—inherently probable—that it is of Indian origin, and that it has (less predictably) interesting affinities with the Gypsy of Europe, which survives even in South Wales. It is a curious fact that the Doms of Gilgit (who conjecturally are of the same stock as the Doms of India and the Béricho of Hunza) have abandoned their own language in favour of Shina. This may well be because Shina has a close relationship to Sanskrit and the modern Indian vernaculars, which Burushaski lacks, and is incomparably easier to learn. 563 197

While every Hunza family plies its own essential crafts, there are a few specially expert folk—like the master-carpenters of whom I have spoken—who undertake the weaving, turning, and milling for their neighbours. Amongst the two hundred families of Aliábád there were perhaps seven or eight recognized weavers, twice as many millers, and at least one lathe-master. 463

We were fortunate in having, on the Middle Channel above us within a few minutes' climb, two master-weavers, old Dádo of No. 7 and Ustád Nadíro of No. 8. The narrow road-plus-water-channel that passed their houses was barely 3 feet wide, and was one of the main internal thoroughfares; but this had not prevented them from digging themselves a loom-pit under the shelter of the house wall, leaving an effective track of scarcely a foot for passers-by to squeeze along, cows, sheep, goats, or people. No one seemed to resent the encroachment. At a pinch you could always step down into the water-channel, full or empty as it might chance. During the pressure of harvest these pits had stood untenanted, and I wondered when the weaving was going to begin. 286 • 487

One day I had been sitting with one of Afiato's daughters-in-law, who was embroidering a festive cap for herself, asking the names of the various stitches and patterns and studying her style of sewing. There is a huge vocabulary connected with 531 192

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[192] embroidering, and I had filled several pages of my notebook
 531 when her attention was diverted by the cow she was minding.
 000 It had plunged down a 6-foot wall and was enjoying itself in a
 neighbour's ripening crop. "Excuse me," said Gohir Nimo,
 "having smitten the cow I shall come back." She did, and we
 resumed the lesson. I took the needle and ventured on a few
 stitches. "Oh, you can sew like us!" she exclaimed with sur-
 prise. There were so many everyday things I could not do just
 like them that her surprise was justified. Soon I noticed her
 growing restive: "I haven't yet had my morning bread; I
 286 expect you had yours before you came out. Good-bye." As
 she left me, chivvying her cow homewards, I looked round for
 new occupation, and saw old grandfather of No. 7 climbing
 cautiously down a field wall with a shapeless bundle under his
 arm. I worked my way across country to the empty field he had
 made for, to see what was toward and found to my delight
 that he was getting his loom into order. Moth had played some
 havoc with his heddle threads and a finicky job he had to re-
 place them. When this was done he called a son or two to
 help him to lay out the warp. They set up and steadied the
 loom with stones, then drove a peg into the ground so many
 cubits off. One of the assistants made fast one end and then
 paid out the wool from a fat ball of doubled thread, slung it
 round the peg, and brought it back to grandfather, who at-
 tached it with an ingenious knot that defied my analysis, and off
 went another loop round the distant peg. When these prelimi-
 naries were over, for which the flat space of the open field was
 necessary, the old man assembled his loom again and climbed
 up the wall to set it up in his pit and get to work. Hunza
 homespun is of a most beautiful thick quality, as unlike as
 possible to the loose, semi-transparent cloth that hand-weavers
 at home achieve, a stuff that would not withstand the hard
 wear of Hunza fields for an instant. Two hundred and forty
 warp threads go to the width of 9 or 10 inches of cloth.

The tiny pit is almost square—2 feet by 2 feet 9 inches—and
 just 2 feet deep; the sides of it are revetted inside with small
 stones on the model of the field walls and edged at the top with
 a wooden kerb, fitted with holes into which pegs can be in-

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serted as required. Outside, at the corners, stand four small stone piers, sometimes monoliths, sometimes just cairns of stones, and on these rest the two poles on which two pairs of heddles ride. Four treadles, threaded on a rod, are connected with the heddles by leather thongs. A stone shelf at the back of the pit accommodates the weaver, who hugs to his tummy the wooden bar on which the *pattoo* is rolled up as completed. There is no room in the cramped space of the twisting road to fling out the warp at length as had been done in the field. It is passed round a peg in the front of the pit and then carried in a loosely twisted rope to a second peg at the side within easy reach of the weaver's right hand, who can thus pay it out to himself as wanted. 286 ●

As the weaver works, some of his family sit by and wind his bobbins, neat little hollow rods which revolve on the pin of his boat-like shuttle. There is an extraordinary fascination about the extreme simplicity and extreme efficiency of all the home-made gadgets of pegs and pins and thongs on which the working of the loom depends. Like lightning the old man works his feet and flings his shuttle to and fro, while with the heavy sliding comb he bangs each new cross thread into its place, as the thick cloth grows under his fingers in the characteristic herring-bone pattern. As the roll grows fatter, the bar is moved out to the next pair of pegs. Grandfather was delighted to hold forth about the details of his craft and explain the uses of his various contraptions, showing the ingenious loops in the vertical heddle-threads that lifted the warp threads in two's to produce the pattern. By his side stood a little rod fitted with a tiny hook. "What on earth is this for?" "Well, you see, sometimes the shuttle falls down into the pit. I have bored a hole in each side of it, and I can hook it up with this."

He would have welcomed photographs, but unfortunately his pitch was heavily and unevenly shaded by a tree in Afiato's garden opposite.

A few days later we were lucky enough to find Ustád Nadíro at work a few hundred yards farther along the road in full sunshine. Even then, in the narrow gangway it was difficult to get room to work a camera at a convenient distance. The

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- 286 Ustad was wisely initiating two disciples into his art: one his son-in-law and one his next-door neighbour of No. 9. As he stood by, superintending and advising, he was busily twiddling a special spindle for doubling the single woollen thread ready for a new warp. Passers-by halted for a chat, children squatted round watching and taking in all that was said. We learnt that 286 465 nine yards of *pattoo* go to the making of a man's cloak and seven to a woman's, and that a skilled weaver can complete a nine-yard piece in two full days' work; a real master in a day and a half. If neighbours enlist his services they supply the wool and also the attendant men, women, or children to wind his bobbins. They may likely have a loom-pit near their house, even if none of them weave themselves; in that case he will go and weave in theirs, otherwise they bring their wool to his. His chief fee for weaving is three ample meals a day while he works, and a gift in kind (or cash if they have any) equal to about tenpence of our money.
- 286 The autumn is a favourite time for weaving; the harvest work is nearly over, and the weather is still warm enough for sitting out of doors. On our afternoon walks at this season we saw many other weavers dotted about not only in Aliábád, but in the neighbouring hamlets between us and Báltít, and we found looms and pits in all cases substantially identical. In only one house was there an innovator who had set up his loom on the roof, and was seated on a raised bench instead of a sunk one. Nadiro kindly promised that when his season's work was over he would bring his whole apparatus down, let us measure it in detail, and take a studio portrait of it. David devoted every Sunday forenoon to taking quarter-plate photographs in an improvised studio with a proper stand camera, thus obtaining exact records of the various vessels and implements that were most characteristic of the country.
- One day Levy Kalbi called us out to see him preparing goats'-hair warp. This was a most entertaining performance. He had a large ball of single goats'-hair thread, ingeniously wound so that one end could be drawn out from the centre of the ball (many knitters at home are familiar with this device). He then took the two ends, one from the centre and one from the cir-

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cumference, twisted them with his fingers till he had a small nucleus of double thread. With a wooden peg he fastened this tiny ball so that it could not unroll, and started swinging it round his head, letting it touch the ground now and again to increase the spin. It travelled in wider and wider circles till the connecting thread became of unmanageable length and began to kink. Then he hauled it in and wound the beautifully twisted length of doubled thread on to the little ball and again pegged it down. Thus he continued till the original ball was exhausted. 286 ●

Not long after, the Ustád's Hérul Nisa came to say that they were setting up a goats'-hair loom at their house if we would care to see it. We found that this time a large vertical frame standing on the roof of No. 8, lashed to the rafter of the balcony, and in course of being strung with just such a warp thread as Kalbi had shown us in the making. While Hunza sheep are uniformly white, three kinds of goat are kept: white, brown, and black. Black hair is used for the warp, while the bobbins are wound with white and brown. The bobbins in this case are long, needle-like rods the full width of the cloth, 2 feet or so, with the hair wound round notches in each end. There are only two heddles, thrown backwards and forwards by a forked peg like a boy's catapult. Goats'-hair weaving is a slower job and heavier than wool-weaving, but the Ustád is master of it, too, and was again initiating two younger men. The different coloured hair allows of pattern-weaving, and they enjoy devising new stripes and squares of brown and white. A very heavy comb is needed to beat down the intractable material, and in order to prevent the cloth being drawn too tight by the cross threads, two "bows" of flexible wood were spiked across it to keep it flat and taut. These are inserted as near as possible to the working edge and moved up as work progresses. The goats'-hair strips are used as rugs, or doubled and sewn together to form sacks and saddle-bags. 233 352 415

One day we were exploring the half-ruined village of the old fort, threading the narrow switchback alleys between deserted houses—so narrow that in places you could only edge along sideways—looking for points of vantage from which to 346 345

made entirely of soft pliable leather, the lower part, including the soles, from yak hide and the upper part from cow or ibex hide.

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I wanted to learn as much as possible about the good people of Hunza. Therefore I was interested in their crafts and craftsmanship.

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All of the cloth used in making the garments the people wear and the special Hunzan hats are woven on looms that have been in use for hundreds of years. They weave 3 distinct types of material. It takes about 3 days to weave a length of approximately 15 yards of the best cloth, which is hardly sufficient to make a man's and a woman's "choga." The woman's requires 7 yards and the man's takes 9 yards. They trade commodities in exchange for the weaving. Then, during the winter, the men of the households cut and stitch the garments into durable, warm clothing.

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The village blacksmith is also the music maker. Somehow, to me, that seems most appropriate for the clang of the hammer on the anvil rings a true music. These blacksmiths and musicians live in a section entirely of their own and they seem to keep mostly to themselves. It seems that all of the blacksmith-musicians of Hunza belong to a tribe known as the Bericho.

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These people were sent to Hunza long, long ago by the Prince of Baltistan who was repaying a favor rendered him by the Mir of Hunza. These people have retained their independence and identity and do not generally take part in Hunzan activities. They even speak a language of their own known as Dumaki. This is also referred to as the speech of the Doma, or Bericho, of Hunza.

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These people dwell in a quaint village or a community entirely of their own located just below Baltit. The history, the behavior and the manners and occupa-

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352 Hunzans have charpoys. Most homes have a chest, or two or three or more, in which they store and keep their belongings. The chests are used to sit on and perhaps eat off. The Hunzan home we visited had a table also.

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286 Every Hunzan home has blankets for covering during the winter and these blankets are made of home-spun wool which is carded, loomed and woven by the villagers. They are equal in weight and warmth to the best blankets that are made in the West. There is no danger of the blankets not being 100 per cent wool, because wool they can get from the sheep or yak's backs.

342 Practically every Hunzan home has an upstairs, too, and this is where the family lives during the summer. It is related that each spring on the 21st of March the family moves upstairs. When there are 4 or 5 members in the family the upstairs is usually divided into two sections or rooms, leaving an open balcony in the center.

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512 The usual Hunzan home is a place to shelter the family against storms, rain, cold and snow. It is not used nearly as much for social intercourse as it is in the West. Therefore, they don't spend as much of their time in the homes. Practically all daylight hours during spring, summer and fall are spent in the fields.

164 Some authorities attribute the good health of the Hunzans to the fact that most of their time is spent out in the open air and sunlight. Could it be that we in the West spend too much of our time inside our comfortable homes and not sufficient outside in the glorious outdoors? This is something worthy of thought and study.

Considering the heights, the ledges, the precipices and steep inclines that are found throughout this country, it is remarkable that there are few cases of injury like broken or fractured limbs, serious accidents due to falling and such. But you must remember that from infancy, children are trained and learn how to

their own land. They spin their own wool. Then they 433
weave it into cloth from which they cut and sew their 286
clothes. However he can also buy or trade for woolen
cloth or he can have his own wool woven for him.

They have little or no money. The few dollars that 436
he might get during the year would come from the 485
expeditions that congregate in the area and hire the
Hunzans as porters. And they are unsurpassed at this
difficult and arduous work.

A man has a right to inflict corporal punishment 593
upon his wife if she nags him. Perhaps that is why the
men of Hunza have that cheerful look.

The children are never neglected because the parents
are always at home. Further, the children do their 857
share of the work in the fields and are taught to do so
from early childhood. This also eliminates juvenile
delinquency.

The people of Hunza have splendid dispositions. 157
They are genial, pleasant, smiling and cheerful. They 181
have deep respect for authority, profound love of the
land, affection, compassion and understanding for their
neighbors and they are most hospitable to strangers.
They hold their heads high, their chests out and they
are strong, honest and hard-working. To me this showed 000
clearly and positively that people can live and that
agriculture can exist and thrive without chemistry,
chemical fertilizers, chemical sprays or synthetic medi-
cines and drugs.

They enjoy happiness without modernization, long
life without doctors, nurses and hospitals, democracy
without bureaucracy, law and order without police and
self-sufficiency without money. Part of the answer, if
not most of it, is their loyalty to and their faith in their
land, a pure case of unremitting agriculture and put-
ting everything back into the soil which was taken

8: Clark N-5 (1948-1951)1963

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Hunza

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CRAFTSMEN like this weaver are not numerous in Hunza; the demanding

mountain economy requires the full-time effort of the society to raise food.